

Discover Newsletter – September 2024



Tree planting as a contribution to peace and reconciliation

An appeal

Dear Friends,

We live in challenging times. The climate crisis is affecting countries throughout the world and countless people are also suffering through many violent conflicts. There are demands on our generosity from all sides, and here we make an appeal for support for a very specific initiative which combines peace-making and reconciliation with planting and protecting trees.

To move in the northwest of Uganda has been dangerous. Conflicts over land between members of different clans have occurred frequently, often leading to some men being killed. These conflicts are made worse by the increasing population, a result of poverty and lack of education, especially for girls.

Thanks, however, to the dedication of Christopher Nyakuni, many conflicts are being resolved and where, formally there was constant hostility, today there is peace. All that remains is to involve members of the now peaceful communities to work together on constructive projects – and that includes planting trees – in fact shea butter trees.

Christopher writes, “Now government officials move safely to Nyara community without any fear of attack or violence because people there are living in peace. They praise my name wherever they go because I have successfully mediated between the two fighting communities.”

Praise is all good and well – but he receives no financial support for this remarkable work, neither from the local government nor from the Catholic Church.

Christopher works as a catechist in Arua Catholic Diocese. Again, he writes “I was appointed to Nyara Chapel purposely to resolve the conflict and bring peace between the Osoko and Aliba clans that many people tried to solve in vain. Now these people are living in peace. It is my joy.”

How has Christopher achieved this? Please read slides 11 to 15 in the [excellent presentation](#) Christopher made in a public webinar on August 18th. This is an excellent description of the essential steps in making peace between groups in conflict.

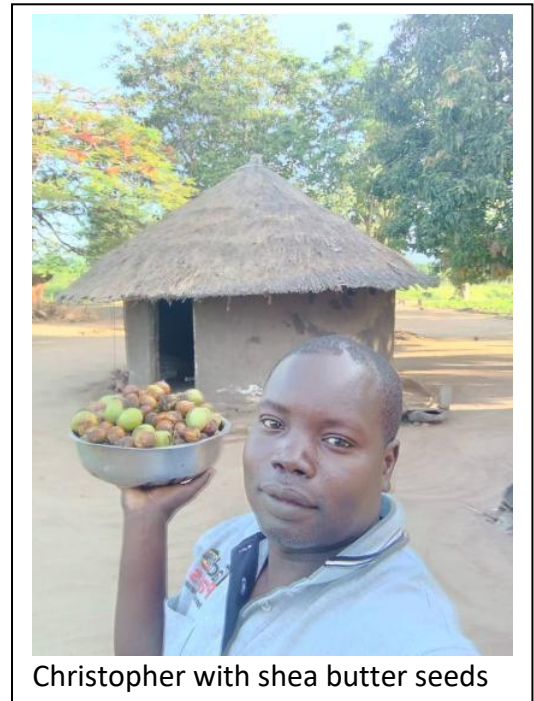


A shea butter tree

Christopher has two immediate aims, two projects to cement the reconciliation of the communities:

1. to raise and plant at least 800 seedling shea butter trees. 112 families will each plant 5 trees. Two churches and one mosque, attended by Osoko and Aliba clans, will each plant 80 trees. The cost of preparing all the seedlings, which will be raised from seeds in the project nursery, and their transport is £750. A donation of £20 would enable 21 trees to be raised, planted and cared for.

Why shea butter trees? They are indigenous, many people cut them indiscriminately for making charcoal and quick profit, yet the green fruits are a rich source of vitamins. Shea butter from the seeds yields a wonderful medicinal oil, which is a potential source of income. The nectar is very good for bees. Like all indigenous trees, shea butter trees provide shade and are compatible with agroforestry. They provide refuge for many insects and small animals and contribute to minimising the worst effects of the climate crisis. Christopher writes, "This tree serves as a symbol of the triumph over violence."



Christopher with shea butter seeds

2. To build a bridge over the small river called Kulukulu, which often floods and is a physical boundary between the land occupied by the Osoko and Aliba clans.



When I visited Nyara Chapel in October last year, I brought a football and a netball – specifically to enable members of the two clans to play games together. It worked! The football team Eceko Rising Stars is registered with Arua District Football Association. The netball team is also doing well. Their slogan is "Play for peace and live in peace."

The construction of the bridge, for which both clans will provide manual labour, will cost £1500. When it is built it will be called "Asianzu Bridge" which means "Peace Bridge".

PLEASE HELP US to support Christopher to continue to make peace and to plant trees. Supporting Christopher to plant trees is perhaps an opportunity to compensate for the carbon footprint of your journeys or flights this summer!

In my last newsletter I summarised the work of our colleagues in the first half of this year and said how massively encouraged I felt. [Here](#) on our homepage you can read the

summary report in detail, and [here](#) a summary of the work our colleagues plan to do between now and the end of the year.

With many greetings,

Keith Lindsey and the Discover-Team